MEND YOUR SPEECH

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MEND YOUR SPEECH

One Thousand Hints on Words Their Use and Abuse

By

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"Mend your Speech lest it may mar your Fortune."—SHAKESPEARE, *King Lear*, act i, scene 1.

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INTRODUCTION

WORDS that are correctly spoken or written are frequently the paving-stones of the highway to social advancement and commercial success. But each stone must fit by the side of its neighbor, if one is to attain that level which forms the smooth sentence. Even as there are "misfits" in paving-stones, so also are there "misfits" in words. English spoken and written correctly is a desideratum in every walk of life. The business man whose speech does not rise above the quality of "I beat him to it"; "He slipped one over on me"; "They couldn't deliver the goods," *i.e.*, perform their promises; who "chews the rag" about "such a business" "sounding good to him"; who believes that he "said a mouthful" when he acquiesced with an "I'll say so," is calculated to "jar you" and is one who is not likely to rise himself.

Likewise, the woman of the "awfully nice" class, who *adores* lobster, wants it the *worst* way, but is not *stuck* on the *place* and would rather go *some place else* where the *eats* are better, might pass for a woman of refinement if she could keep her mouth shut until she had learned to say correctly what she has to say. There is also her companion, given to extravagances of speech as well as of dress that are exasperating for their exaggeration—the woman whose least malaise is an "agony"; to whom every slight mishap is "a fearful accident"; whose latest gown is "simply adorable," and whose favorite of the opposite sex is "awfully jolly." These are women who have such "an elegant time" that one might be forgiven for wishing, in all charity, that they might "die laughing," before they attained their ambition to rise in society.

Such expressions as "He done it," "I seen it," "Them things," "You was," are heard on every

side. "Drank" and "drunk" are constantly misused. "Like" is a frequent substitute for "as if," and "feel badly" is used, apparently with meticulous care, when "feel bad" is better English. Why do some writers use the Scots law term *proven* when they invariably mean to convey the sense of the English word *proved?* Why employ such a form as "goes on to say" when "says" is just as good, if not infinitely better? Why say, "Mr. Brown went on to say . . ." when one means "Mr. Brown continued . . ."? Why in the world prefer to talk of *fight'n* and *shoot'n* or of *fish'n* and *hunt'n*, when by carefully enunciating the final syllable of these words, one can overcome one of the worst phases of slovenliness in speech?

Efforts to correct errors in speech and writing have frequently been made. Book after book has been written, printed, and widely circulated. Error after error has been pointed out; ridicule even has been used to check the tide of slip-shod slush which passes among some people as English speech. Good English is an art and not a science. It is the result of practise rather than precept. Little harm, if any, is done by refreshing the minds of writers and speakers and, in this friendly way trying to correct their mistakes as well as our own. We need to be reminded of, rather than chided for, our lapses in the use of our mother tongue, and every effort made that leads us away from the ill-kempt, sloppy, and tatterdemalion unloveliness of work-a-day English is deserving of hearty support.

It is true that a large number of persons claim that there is no need to use care in the choice of the words we speak—those who would rather be damned with Shakespeare and Milton than saved by the rules of Doctor Syntax. But the mere fact that one understands what another means is not all that is necessary. It is a fact that the failure to correctly interpret the meaning of words lies at the bottom of many of the cases that perplex our Judiciary. For this reason alone, if for no other, it is the duty of every educated man and woman to write or to say in clear, unmistakable terms what they have in mind.

Recently, a correspondent, writing to a morning paper, asked: "Is there a rule in English

which says that *a verb must agree in number* with the *noun* immediately *preceding it, whether or not that noun acts as subject to the sentence?*" To this question he received the answer, "No." But the fact remains that the rule is—*The verb must agree with the nominative* which is placed *nearest to it*, whether this be singular or plural; as, Neither the servants nor the *master is* respected; Neither the master nor the *servants are* respected. *Cæsar non supra grammaticos!*

A company of manufacturers, famous for the quality of the silks which they recently offered for sale, referred in one of their advertisements to "the *exploiting* and selling of any *worthy* product." The verb *exploit* is commonly used in a derogatory sense. To *exploit* is often "to utilize or employ in selfish schemes for one's own advantage without regard to the right or rights of another." It is, therefore, a term that should *not* be associated with any *worthy* act or cause. An unprincipled dealer may be said to *exploit* merchandise of *inferior* quality.

Of a recently launched literary review, the editor wrote that his periodical would have "no political or *literary policy*," and continued: "Its *purpose* will be to set every significant book against its literary background, place it, and point out its strength and weaknesses. Its reviewers will praise whenever possible, and condemn when necessary, but neither puff nor sneer." One might well ask what the editor of this publication thinks the word "policy" means? A *policy* is "a course of action." Can it be possible that the writer thought it irrevocably associated with the "puff and sneer"? The *purpose* of the editor is unquestionably his *policy*.

A corporation formed for the purpose of supplying advertising service furnished one of its customers with a catch-line reading, "Is Your Data Ready?" When attention was directed to the violation of the rule that a verb must agree with its subject in person and number, and that the line should read, "*Are* Your *Data* Ready?" the following reply was made: "This matter had been considered by our Production Department prior to the appearance of the advertisement. We decided, however, that the head-line, 'Is Your Data Ready?'

though *rhetorically* [?] incorrect, is the way that the word 'data' is popularly accepted—as singular. We, therefore, decided to *sacrifice rhetoric* to prevent the head-line from looking strange." This reply displays almost as much ignorance as the original—"We decided that *the head-line . . . is the way that* the word *data* is popularly accepted—*as singular.*" Was any other sentence as fearfully and wonderfully cast? Rhetoric is confused with grammar pure and simple.

Alas, for the reputation of a corporation that permits errors to be supplied by its Production Department under the pretext that "*data is popularly accepted*—as *singular*"—a pretext without the least foundation in fact! In some of the fields of human activity there are persons who would be better fitted to wield the shears and the paste-brush than the pen—men and women of assurance but of no literary taste or gift—who persistently violate the canons of good English, making use of solecisms that offend the educated ear. The stage is not to be excepted. Of a recent play the dramatic critic of a New York newspaper wrote: "The author's dialogue is so crude that he should have kept his dictionary instead of giving it to *Anna* in the first act. And while he was about it, a little perusal of an English grammar also would have helped the play."

And another critic in another paper wrote: "If the author had taken only a little trouble with the dictionary instead of attributing the search for knowledge altogether to his heroine the piece might not have been the most illiterate of the year. Indeed, its ignorance was unnecessary."

In some circles, to write or to speak good English is to be counted a pedant. In these days when the fairly well read find it difficult to break away from traditional misuse, convention and conservatism have their places in the language, but is there anything more offensive to the ear accustomed to good English than, "Had you have gone?" for "Had you gone?"; "He had used to spend" instead of "He used to spend," or "He had been accustomed to spend"; "Do not let us" for "Let us not"; "sort of" for "as it were." Recently, an eminent counsel cross-examining a witness

asked: "*Had* you a light with you?" to elicit the reply, "No, I *didn't*."

Teachers of English admit that, notwithstanding the eternal vigilance they exercise, the results of their labors are most discouraging. This, they claim, is in large measure due to our environment. Improvement of speech, if it is to be effective, must, like charity, begin in the home; for the home, not the newspaper or the book, not the school or college, is the true source of good English—the others are valued aids in attaining perfect diction. Just as it is in the home that speech-pollution begins, it is there, the teachers claim, that it must be checked.

Those who are familiar with the doings of the college campus tell us that tradition requires one never to use correct English if slang can be found to serve the purpose in hand. Every undergraduate has a nickname, and he retaliates by nicknaming every object, act, and relation in the universe. The nearest approach to his language is the jargon in which the newspapers report a baseball game. It would be as bad form for him to use good English as it is to be a "grind."

The demand that everything be brought to a common level is partly responsible for this. When the average man speaks incorrectly, the opinion that correct speech is an affectation gains ground, and when, in the bustle and haste of American life, correct speech and pure pronunciation attract attention, there is among the people a tendency to discount it as an attempt to rise above one's associates. The man who makes use of it is not infrequently charged with trying to impress himself upon his associates at more than his face value. He is thought to be an aspirant for social honors, an ambition that to the average American is almost the lowest depth to which a man can sink. But none of these feelings is created when an American associates with an Englishman. The Englishman is conceded the right to speak correctly, as if that were an inherent part of his nature. Why? Perhaps because there are some of us who associate correct English with snobbery; yet opportunity, advancement, and prestige await those who speak correctly and carry themselves with address.

The man who trims his words by imperfect utterance, and clips their final syllables, thereby tacitly admits his preference for the vulgar tongue. We have evidence on every side that there is room for improvement in the present-day usage of English speech, not merely among citizens of alien tongue, but among men and women of American and British birth and breeding. Slang and bad grammar may have charm of their own, but they are not easy to understand. If slang, prattle, and affected or downright ignorance are to be allowed to do as they please with the formal language, they will soon lose both their charm and their novelty.

The glory of our speech is not to be found merely in the strength of its vocabulary and the richness of its phrase. To that glory belong as much the harmony of its sounds—the cadence of its intonation—and the intimate association of these sounds with the thought expressed. These we can attain by avoiding two forms of enunciation—the first, that effusive effervescence of speech that reminds one so forcibly of a sputtering soda-fountain, on the one hand, and, on the other, its antithesis, the pinchbeck method of delivery, so miserly in its utterance that it permits words only to ooze through pursed lips. Why is it that certain animals articulate with more feeling than do some human beings?

Good English is learned easily and rapidly by hearing it spoken and by reading it. A casual or an intimate knowledge of the science of grammar is not indispensable to any one who would speak the language correctly. It is desirable, of course, because through this knowledge one is able to dissect speech and to explain the relations of words to one another; but, to be good, English does not *always* have to conform to the rules codified by the grammarians. Much modern English that is strictly grammatical is starched English; so stiff that it has lost its inherent quality—that plasticity which makes our language one of the easiest into which to mold thought. But stiffness is not the only fault. There is, in addition to this, a tendency to give to words values that they do not command. To what influence are we to trace the violations done to word values nowadays? Is it due to the contempt for classic learning that

has manifested itself in some parts of the United States during the past twenty years? Or, is it because the world of letters has been overrun by hordes born to the shovel rather than the pen who, in the words of Pope, forget that "there's nobody at home"?

No matter how sternly one may repress the misuse of English, it is impossible to correct all the errors that are sanctioned by the exceptions that prove the rule, and that are established by reputable usage, because these are now so firmly fixed that they have become accepted idioms. To acquire an accurate knowledge of these, it is necessary to maintain a continuous right-hand friendship with the dictionary, the practical value of which is immeasurable. By associating with persons who speak correctly, one learns almost imperceptibly to do the same thing. By reading the best books—the masterpieces of our tongue—one familiarizes oneself with the forms that are accepted as standards. Children, who never give a thought to grammar when they speak, often speak excellent English. That there are some children who ill-use their mother tongue goes without saying. Evil communications still corrupt good grammar in the home or on the street, and they will continue to do so notwithstanding all the steps that may be taken to prevent them from so doing, but we can all help in stemming the tide of illiterate gibberish that seems now to be at the flood. Slovenly speech is as clearly an indication of slovenly thought as profanity is of a degraded mind. Therefore, let us heed the advice Shakespeare has given us—"Mend your speech lest it may mar your fortune."

F. H. V.

"FOR simplicity and purity of language, we have now substituted weak sophistry, covered by a redundancy of words, selected less for their import and application than their unusual and extraneous character; the excessive use of hyperbole; a general affectation of foreign terms; obsolete and vulgar phrases; unnatural metaphor, forced with perpetual effort; and a license, universally assumed, of creating new words with no other apparent object than to avoid the usual and appropriate term. All this extravagant folly is spreading rapidly through the land, producing an inevitable consequence—the corruption of the language under the singular description 'the diffusion of *useful knowledge!*'"

—FRANCIS VESEY,
Decline of the English Language.

MEND YOUR SPEECH

A

able, -ible. What is the rule governing the use of these terminations? *-able* is used after verb-stems ending in *a;* *-ible* is a suffix of adjectives from Latin stems not *a*-stems. In some malformed modern words *-able* has the power of "full," as, *veritable* (full of truth), *charitable* (full of charity), *profitable* (full of profit), *sociable* (full of companionship), etc. *Capable* means "having the power of taking" instead of an object "that may be taken." *Favorable, honorable, sensible* are in use to-day in their original senses, (1) in favor, popular; (2) procuring honor; and (3) perceptible through the senses.

abortive. A common journalistic perversion for failing. That which is *abortive* is untimely in its birth. Thus, figuratively, anything brought out before maturity is *abortive.* But the word should not be used to mean failing. *Abortive* plans are plans that are coming to naught.

accident, injury. *Accident* is frequently used incorrectly for *injury.* An *accident* may be injurious, and *injuries* painful, but never say, "He suffered from a *painful accident.*" An *accident* is a misfortune or a calamity; the word should never be used for *wound* or *hurt.*

accidental, incidental, casual, contingent. That which is *accidental* is opposed to what is designed or planned; that which is *incidental* is premeditated. *Casual* is occasional, that is, occurring at irregular intervals, and *contingent* is dependent upon an uncertain future event.

"The book fell *accidentally* into my hands."

"The sermon, though excellent, contained *incidental* assertions which gave offense to many."

"He slept that night in mean houses open to any *casual* wanderers."

"Many a *contingent* event baffles man's knowledge."

accord. *Accord* is to render as due, grant, allow; literally, it means to bring heart to heart; hence, to reconcile; reconcile oneself, agree, or agree to. Do not say, "The data he asked for were *accorded* him"; say, rather, "*given* to him." Compare DATUM.

acerbity, acrimony, asperity. *Acrimony* is from the Latin *acrimonia*, sharpness, the characteristic of peppers and mustard-seeds—a biting sharpness. In speech it denotes corrosiveness of feeling indicated by the bitterness of the words used. Many other words are similar in meaning, as *acerbity*, which is not as deep-seated as *acrimony*, and originally was associated with acts and laws. Bacon says: "The *acerbity* of it deadens the execution of the law." *Asperity* is a roughness of surface, but indicates manner of treatment rather than disposition. The word borders on *harshness*. One may reprove another with *asperity*, as Dr. Samuel Johnson reproved Lord Chesterfield in the words: "I hope it is no very cynical *asperity* not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received." The differences of their meaning will be best seen from the following examples of their use.

"A spell that can soften the *acerbity* of political warfare."—BEACONSFIELD.

"The *acrimonies* which the debate had kindled."—FROUDE.

"He demanded with much *asperity* what she meant."—DICKENS.

acquire, contract. One *acquires* a habit, does not *contract* it, but one may *contract* a cold or a debt.

act (*verb*). *Do* and *make* are nearly synonymous with *act*, but *act* is general in meaning. *Make* applies to that which is done by a particular contrivance, or for a particular end. We *do* our duty and *make* that which we need.

"*Act* in the living present."—LONGFELLOW.

"If it were *done* when 'tis *done*, then 'twere well
It were *done* quickly."—SHAKESPEARE.

"Thou shalt not *make* unto thee any graven image."—*Exodus*.

actual fact. Tautological. Do not say, "It is an *actual fact* that President Wilson used the phrase 'Watchful waiting,'" for that which is a *fact* is an *actuality*, that which is *actual* exists in *fact*. Say, rather, "It is a *fact* that . . ."

acute, keen, sharp. *Acute* is from the Latin *acuere*, to sharpen, from *acus*, needle. Several words resemble this closely in meaning. *Keen* approaches *acute*, but has a wider range of meaning. *Sharp* is applied to human faculties and is on a lower grade than *acute*. We speak of a *sharp* lad and of an *acute* intelligence.

"Who has a sense of wrong so *acute* as a generous boy?"—THACKERAY.

"Nature had given him a *keen* understanding."—MACAULAY.

"Curiosity has an appetite which is very *sharp* but very easily satisfied."—BURKE.

ad. A familiar locution in the publishing world condemned by some purists, but a commercial colloquialism that has come to stay. While permissible in conversation, it would be out of place in literature, where, if it were accepted, one might by analogy expect to find *ed* used for *editorial*.

administer. A formal word, meaning, primarily, "to have the charge or direction of; also, to provide with; to supply, as something necessary; measure out, or inflict." One may say, "The priest *administered* the last sacrament to the dying man"; "The father *administers* chastisement to his unruly son"; but not, "The gunman died from blows *administered* by the policeman." One *deals* blows, does not *administer* them.

adore, reverence, veneration, worship. *Adore*, from the Latin *ad*, to, and *oro*, speak, is, strictly speaking, a word of most solemn import, frequently put to frivolous uses. *Reverence* and *revere*, from the Latin *reverentia*, reverence or awe, differ from *adore* in that they imply fear arising from the consciousness of weakness and dependence. Between *reverence* and *veneration*, from the Latin *veneror*, venerate, there is the essential difference that the object of *veneration* is nearer to us than the object of *reverence*. *Worship*, from its Anglo-Saxon etymon *weorth*, worth, implies either the object that is worth or the worth itself. A child may *like* cherries and *adore* its mother, but it does not *adore* cherries though it *likes* its mother, and it need not be assumed that the young bride *worships* her husband because she places burnt offerings before him three times a day.

"There is no end of his greatness. The most exalted creature he has made is only capable of *adoring* it. None but himself can comprehend it."—ADDISON.

"All the King's servants, that were in the King's gate, bowed and *reverenced* Haman."—*Esther*.

"I *venerate* old age, and I love not the man who can look without emotion upon the sunset of life."—LONGFELLOW.

"By reason man a Godhead can discern,
But how he should be *worshiped* can not learn."
—DRYDEN.

affliction, distress, grief, sorrow, trouble. An *affliction* is a grievous malady of mind or body; *distress* is more mental than physical. *Trouble* is a disturbance of the mind but is lighter than *affliction* or *distress*. *Grief* and *sorrow* are near synonyms, but *grief* is more demonstrative; *sorrow*, quiet and reserved.

"Round he cast his baleful eyes
That witnessed huge *affliction* and dismay."
—MILTON.

"This event filled him with the utmost *distress* and despondency."—NEWMAN.

"Yet man is born unto *trouble* as the sparks fly upward."—*Job*.

"*Sorrow* is humble and dissolves in tears,
Make not your Hecuba in fury rage,
And show a ranting *grief* upon the stage."
—DRYDEN.

"When all hope of happiness is dead, *grief* breaks the heart, and life continues but a walking shadow until death completes the catastrophe in silence."—FRANÇOIS VIDAL.

afraid, afeared, fearful, timid, timorous. Some purists declare arbitrarily that one should say "I *fear*" instead of "I am *afraid*," but none gives any reason for this. *Afraid* is a form of *afeared*, meaning "in a state of fear." Once a common literary word, Shakespeare having used it more than thirty times, but rare in literature since 1700, it has still a very wide colloquial use, in the forms *afeard* and *'feard*, especially in the southern United States. *Fearful* is "full of fear." *Timid* and *timorous* are derived from the Latin *timor*, fear. *Afraid* may have either a physical or moral use. *Fearful* and *timorous* are applied only physically and personally. *Timid* is generally used in a moral sense.

> "Men are *afraid* of breaking down where they are strongest, but are seldom *afraid* of their weaknesses."—HENRY WARD BEECHER.
>
> "Why are ye *fearful*, O ye of little faith?"—*Matthew*.
>
> "Bella was so *timid* of him."—DICKENS.
>
> "I shall proceed with doubtful and *timorous* steps."—GIBBON.

aftermath. A word persistently misused. Early July is the time of the *math;* that is, the first mowing of a meadow. The short grass—with a sufficiency of rain—will grow again, and later will come the second mow or *aftermath*. *Not* "the *aftermath* of love," unless a second marriage is involved; *nor* "the storm and its *aftermath*," unless the reference is to a reward reaped, or a penalty incurred, as the result of a family quarrel.

> "No *aftermath* has the fragrance and the sweetness of the first crop."—SOUTHEY.

age, old. Distinguish carefully between these words. In the Revised Version of the Bible, *Luke* viii, 42, it is said that the daughter of Jairus was "about twelve years of *age*." But in *Mark* v, 42, one reads that she was twelve years *old*. Why? The Authorized Verson reads "she was of the *age* of twelve years," which is undoubtedly better English, for is it not preferable to speak of a *young* girl as being a certain *age* than to speak of her as being *old*?

agreeable, agreeably. Words often erroneously used in correspondence. *Agreeable* in this sense is a commercial colloquialism meaning, "being in accordance or conformity" as with some previous action. "*Agreeable to* your request, I have forwarded the goods"—correctly, this should be, "*Agreeably with* your request, etc.," meaning, "so as to be agreeable." "*Agreeably with* your instructions," not "*agreeable to*."

alleron. In English a word of three syllables, a'le-ron (a as in "ale"); in French, pronounced as two, aile-ron'.

allies. Should be pronounced a-lies' *not* al'leys.

all over. Commonly misused in such phrases as, "The plague spread *all over* the country"; "the news of the armistice flashed *all over* the world." As *all* modifies the noun and not the prepositional

phrase in these sentences, the words should be transposed, "*over all* the country"; "*over all* the world." But the words are used in the correct order in the following: "We believe in the flag as the emblem of liberty, equality, and justice to *all over* whom it waves."

all right. Is there any authority for the use of *all right* as one word like *already*, or must it always be written *all right*?

The old English was *alright*. This form, however, is obsolete now. *Already*, now used as a solid word, was originally written *all ready*. *Already* and *altogether* have meanings that differ greatly from *all ready* and *all together*. *Already* means "beforehand"; *all ready*, means "everything is in a state of preparedness." *Altogether* means "completely"; *all together* means "every one in union, or conjointly."

allude. This word is frequently misused, its true meaning being seldom realized. It means "to hint at playfully, refer to incidentally, or by suggestion," *not* merely "to mention, speak of, or refer to." To *allude* to a thing is to speak of it playfully (from the Latin *ludere*, to play), without direct reference. But, in general, the word is used in a sense opposed to this. One who loses an article may advertise his loss in the morning paper. The finder, in replying to the advertisement, is almost certain to say, "The package *alluded* to in your advertisement . . . ," although no allusion has been made. The form referred to is a better one to use.

allusion, illusion. An *allusion* is a playful or indirect reference to something without definite mention of it. An *illusion* is a mental image which when compared with the real object represented by it has a deceptive character. It is a false perception.

> "The great art of a writer shows itself in the choice of pleasing *allusions* . . . taken from the beautiful works of Nature."—*The Spectator*, No. 421.
>
> "*Illusion* consists either in perceiving a totally wrong object in place of the right one, . . . or in investing the right object with the wrong attributes."—GURNEY, *Phantasms*.

almost never. An awkward phrase; say, rather, "very seldom."

already. See under ALL RIGHT.

also. A small word frequently misplaced. See *Matthew* x, in the Revised Version of the Bible, and the list of the names of the Apostles which ends, "and Judas Iscariot, *who also* betrayed him" (verse 4). From this one who does not know the facts is free to deduce that Christ was betrayed by all his Apostles including "Judas Iscariot, *who also* betrayed him." The sentence should have ended, "And Judas Iscariot *also*, who betrayed him." In *II Corinthians* xi, 18, of the same version, one may read: "Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory *also*," which means that the Apostle will glory in addition to doing something

else, whereas the intention is clearly, "*I also* will glory." Again in the 21st verse: "Whereinsoever any is bold, I am bold *also*." Here the sentence should be transposed to read, "*I also* am bold."

alternation. A word occasionally misused to convey the sense of an unbroken series, but *alternation* is "reciprocal succession," or "succession of the numbers of two series in alternate orders," "the occurrence of two things in turn"; as, the *alternation* of day and night, the *alternation* of toil and leisure.

alternative. A choice between two, but often used of a greater number, and sometimes incorrectly in the phrase, "Which of two *alternatives*." Correctly speaking of two things, we may refer to one as the *alternative*. Two *alternatives* implies four objects. Avoid the Gladstonian locution (*Oxford Essays*, p. 26, 1857): "My decided preference is for the fourth and last of these *alternatives*." Bear in mind that this word means *one choice* out of two things, courses, etc. To speak of being "forced to choose between *alternatives*" is to speak correctly.

altogether. See under ALL RIGHT.

amaze, astonish. One is *amazed* who is confounded or bewildered with surprize, wonder, or sudden fear. A father is *amazed* at his son's conduct when it proves to be different from what was expected. He who is *astonished* is affected with a strongly disturbing confusion or emotion in the mind, as "The people were *astonished* at his doctrine."

angry at you. One may be *angry at* an outrage, not *at* a brother, but *with* him. "If you don't quit teasing me, I'll be *angry at you*," is a form of expression very common to certain localities where English is more forcible than correct. Angry *with* a person, *at* a thing.

anonymous, unanimous. *Anonymous* is not to be confused with *unanimous*. An *anonymous* production is one of unknown authorship. *Unanimous* denotes "sharing the same views or sentiments; expressing agreement, as of opinion on the part of a number of persons; as, the decision of the jury was *unanimous*."

Anon., when used after a quotation, is not, as some persons suppose, the name of an author, but a contraction of the word *anonymous*, used to indicate the fact that the name of the author is unknown.

an't I, aren't I. The first is a contraction of "Am not I"; the second of "Are not." Is there any authority for the use of "Are I"? There is not. Only "Am I" is the correct form.

Aren't is used for "Are not" when the subject follows, as, "*Aren't* you?" "*Aren't* they?" The best conversational usage contracts the verb when the subject precedes: "*We're* not"; "*You're* not," etc.

In England the phrase "*Aren't* I" is erroneously used for "Am I not," possibly through thought-

lessness arising out of a confusion of tenses. No educated person says "Are I?" or "I are," but "An't I?"—strictly, "*A'n't I*," the colloquial contraction of "Am not I,"—frequently heard and not infrequently misspelled. Here *the verb must agree with its subject.*

appreciate, enjoy. We *appreciate* a gift or our opportunities. One may *enjoy* a fortune or a good meal. The hungry man *appreciated* the invitation to dinner, and *enjoyed* the food supplied.

are. What is meant when one says, "The quiet and beautiful seclusion of this nook *are* described"? Is the plural verb correct? It is, if the words "quiet" and "seclusion" are both nouns indicating two different features of the nook described, but if so, the article *the* should be repeated —"*The* quiet and *the* beautiful seclusion of the nook *are* described." If, however, the words "quiet" and "beautiful" are merely connected adjectives modifying the noun *seclusion*, the verb used should be in the singular. In some cases *are* is used as a singular or as a plural according to the context—"*You are* a wonderful woman!" (Singular.) "*Are you* all there?" (Plural.)

asperity. See ACRIMONY.

assail, assault. See ATTACK.

assemble, meet. The word *assemble* connotes the gathering together of more persons than two. In the sentence, "Two of the members are *assembled* in the hall, the word *assembled* implies that more members are expected, and that the two present are carrying out the *assembling* which other members will ultimately complete, but the word is redundant. "Two of the members are in the hall" is all that need be said.

astonish. See AMAZE.

ate. Pronounced *et;* sometimes misused for *eaten;* Not "My breakfast was *ate* (but *eaten*) in a hurry," but one may say, "I *ate* my breakfast in a hurry."

—ate up. Omit *up* except when used figuratively, for one actually eats *down*. But, "the extravagances of his wife *ate up* his resources."

atone for, expiate. Both terms indicate reparation for offense, but *atone* is general, whereas *expiate* is particular. One *atones* for a fault by any form of suffering. Another *expiates* a crime by suffering only a legal punishment. *Atone* signifies "to be at one with." *At one*, for "reconciled," is as old as Robert Mannyng. "Make *an onement* with God," "set *at onement*," are expressions of the sixteenth century. One who *atones* is one who is at peace, or good friends with his associates. To *expiate* is to "make amends for by suffering or reparation," as, "the criminal *expiated* his crime on the scaffold."

atrocious, wicked. These words are not synonymous. The murderer who dismembered the body of his victim committed an *atrocious* crime. The boy who stole the apples, though following the impulses of his nature, was guilty of a *wicked* act.

attack, assail, assault. To *attack* is to make an ap-

proach toward, in order to do violence to the person. To *assail* or to *assault* is to make a sudden impetuous attack. The reputations of public men are often wantonly *attacked* in the press at election time; the men are *assailed* in every direction by murmurs and complaints, by the discontented electors, and might be subject to *assault* but for fear of arrest and imprisonment.

at that. A cant phrase condemned by Gould as little removed from slang, but used by everybody. He cites "a very carefully edited New York newspaper" whose editor said, "It is easy to say now that inspection of the grounds in the dark by one man, and an old man *at that*, was a dangerous practise."

Gould continues: "Such an expression might be expected from an uneducated person. It is not only vulgar; it is, also, in a strictly philological sense, unintelligible. The writer or speaker means, besides, *moreover*, *into the bargain*, etc.; but 'at that,' except conventionally, means no such thing."

attire. Correctly used to-day for that which is worn or serves as dress or clothing. It is synonymous with garments, costumes, and, figuratively, means anything that adorns or dresses. Properly this word means head-dress. Trench ("Select Glossary") points out that "*attired* with stars," in Milton's beautiful lines on "Time," is not *clothed* with stars, but *crowned* with them. See *Revelations* xii, 1, "Upon her head a crown of twelve stars." See also, "She tore her *attire* from her head and rent her golden hair." ("Seven Champions of Christendom," bk. ii, ch. 13.)

auditorium. The part of a public building, as a theater, occupied by the audience; also, any space so occupied. Distinguish from SPECTATORIUM, which see.

aunt, ant. Distinguish between the pronunciations of these words. The word *aunt* is pronounced variously, the pronunciation differing with the region where the word is used. For instance, in Southern England it is pronounced with the *a* as in *arm*, whereas in the North of England, it has a less full sound, and the *a* is frequently given a pronunciation verging toward *a* in *am*, a sound which is given in both regions to the *a* in *ant*. This distinction has wide vogue in the United States and Canada.

au revoir for adieu. A French idiom used by persons parting one from another, *with the expectation of meeting again soon*. Though the French means, literally, "to see one again," the English idiom is "until we meet again." The French phrase is often thoughtlessly misused, as in, "Well, if I don't see you again, old man, *au revoir!*" The correct French word to use, if French must be used, is *adieu*, meaning "farewell," not *au revoir*.

auspicious, inauspicious. The word *auspicious* means "presaging or bestowing good fortune," and *inauspicious*, the very opposite. Occasions are *auspicious* or *inauspicious*. One should not apply the terms to weather. The weather may be *clement* or *inclement; mild* or *stormy*, or, as our

English friends sometimes colloquially term it, *beastly* or *nasty*.

aviation. This word is correctly pronounced a″vi-a′shun *not* av″i-a′shun.

B

back. Pronounced bak, *not* bek, an affectation heard on both sides of the Atlantic.

balcony. Pronounced with the stress on the first syllable—bal′co-ny, *not* bal-co′ny. The o is obscure and has the same sound as o in "atom," not that of o in "go."

ballet. Pronounced ba″le′, *not* bal-let′, which is the pronunciation of the word when it was written *ballette*.

banister. An undesirable corruption of *baluster* used to designate the railing at the side of a staircase. Originally *baluster* was not applied to the rail, but to its bulging supports, from their supposed resemblance to the wild-pomegranate flower, whence the name came, through the Italian *balaustra*.

bargain. Pronounced bar′gen, *not* bar-gin′. Compare PORCELAIN.

barrage. Pronounced bar′ij in English but bar″-razh′ (both a's as in "bar" and z as in "azure") in French.

basilisk. Pronounced bas′i-lisk, *not* baz′i-lisk.

bas-relief. Pronounced bah″re-leef′, *not*, as in England, bas″re-leef′. The word is from the French.

bear, bee. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (1) and (2).

begin, commence. *Begin* is from the Anglo-Saxon *beginnan*, and although there is little difference in the meaning of these words, there is a slight difference in their application. We say, "The alphabet *begins* (not "commences") with the letter A." Also, "It is *beginning* (not "commencing") to rain." One overworked *begins* to feel tired.

Commence is derived from the French *commencer*, and comes from the Latin *com-* (from *cum*), together, and *initio*, from *in*, into, and *eo*, go. It is frequently used where *begin* is more appropriate. A boy of foreign birth, on being rebuked for bullying a playmate, replied in defense that "he *commenced* to kick me." *Begin* is preferred before an infinitive.

Commence generally applies, as a verb, directly to its object, which is something to be done, thus implying action. Its use leans toward pomp and parade, and, therefore, it is associated with formal functions and ceremonies, which are said to *commence* rather than to *begin*, the latter word being restricted to ordinary and familiar activities. *Begin* is the broader term of the two words, is the homelier, is English, is more familiar, and is shorter.

benefit, permit, remit. The rule regarding the formation of the past tense and past participle of verbs ending in *-it* is that words of *one syllable*,

or of more than one syllable *with the accent on the last syllable* (as *re-mit'*), double the "t," so *permitted* and *remitted* are correct; other words do not do so. In *ben'e-fit*, the accent falls on the first syllable; therefore, *benefited* is correct.

better part. Avoid as an objectionable colloquialism when used to mean "most of." *Not* "The boy ate the *better part* of the pudding," for this implies that he left the *worse part* for others. Substitute *most of*.

blame. Sometimes used incorrectly, as in "Why *blame* it on me?" instead of "Why *blame* me for it?" To *blame* a fault *on* one is incorrect, for to blame is "to charge with a fault." We *blame* a motorman *for* an accident, not *with* it.

boatswain. Pronounced bo'sn, a pronunciation that has displaced the formal bot'swen.

both. This word expresses the idea of two things which are distinct, the one from the other, and should be used only with a noun and a verb in the plural number. Not "Five editions issued by *both the* Oxford and *the* Cambridge *press*," as George Washington Moon wrote, in "The Revisers' English," p. 81, but "*both the presses*." The word is misused frequently in conversation. *Not* "They *both* resemble each other," where "both" is redundant, but "They resemble each other."

buoy. Pronounced boy, *not* bwoy, although formerly the last pronunciation had some vogue.

but that. Commonly used erroneously for *that* by persons who believe themselves to be letter perfect in grammar and lexicographical lore. Even Trench wrote "He never doubts *but that* he knows their intention."

but . . . what. A form of expression condemned as incorrect and unparsable, and commonly used for *but . . . that*, which see above. Although its incorrectness is established, it has received sanction of literary usage from Scott, Lytton, Hawthorne, and others. Avoid such a use as the following:

> *M.*—"Couldn't you have used some of that money for hose?"
>
> *L.*—"I suppose so, *but* I done the best *what* I knew how."—*New York Times*, Jan. 24, 1903.

by. A little word that sometimes causes trouble. Being a preposition, it is sometimes placed at the beginning of a sentence, and, governing the objective case, requires that this case shall be used, as in "*By whom* was the war won?" *not* "*Who* was the war won *by*?" But the rule has been frequently violated even by Shakespeare. See *The Tempest*, act. iii, sc. 3, and *King John*, act iv, sc. 2. Compare WHO, WHOM.

C

can, may. Do not say *can* when you mean *may*. Not "*Can* I see you a moment," nor "*Can* I use the telephone," but "*May* I . . . do so."

can not. A term sometimes found written as one

word, sometimes as two words. The one-word form is incorrect, for *can* is a verb positive. In Old English, the negative form was *ne can*, similar to that still used in French, *ne peut pas* (*can not*). Try to inflect the solid-word form, writing it—I *cannot*, and you can not go far without being struck by the absurdity of the result. For example, "I *cannot*," "Thou *cannotest*," "He *cannots*"! Always write it *can not*.

casual. See ACCIDENTAL.

cattle, chough. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (3) and (4).

cold, coldly. Distinguish between these words. "I feel *cold*," indicates that the person speaking is cold; but, "I feel *coldly* about it," means that the speaker is indifferent or unenthusiastic regarding the matter under discussion.

collate. A term usually applied to manuscripts and books, which when "compared critically, with a view to noting agreement or discrepancies," are said to be *collated*. Accounts may be said to be *collated* when gathered together for comparison, but *compiled* when the bills are made out.

collective noun. This noun is sometimes looked upon as a plural, and whenever so considered a verb in the plural should be used. Whenever it is considered as a unit, a verb in the singular should be used. For example, in the sentence, "There is one class of bills that have been introduced that *are* a menace to our interests," *is* should be substituted for "are." By inversion the sentence would read: "Of bills that have been introduced there is one *class* that *is* a menace to our interests." It will thus be seen that the antecedent of the second "that" is "class," and, hence, the singular form of the verb should be used.

Whether the use of the plural verb in the sentence "The House Committee *announce*" is or is not correct depends upon the sense in which the word "committee" is used. If it is used distributively the verb in the plural is correct, the intention being to convey the idea that all the individual members of the committee separately announce the matter, but if the committee is regarded as a unit, that is, collectively, the singular form of the verb is required.

In the sentence, "Israel is gathering to *their* long-forsaken home," *its* should be substituted for "their."

As regards the verb to use with the phrase, "The majority of people," both "the majority *was*" and "the majority *were*" are right, but the first considers "the majority" as a collective unit, whereas the second considers "majority" as a distributive consisting of separate units.

The correct collective noun to use in differentiating a collection, cluster, group, or crowd has frequently caused disputes. The wide range of terms applied to birds, beasts, and fishes may be seen from the following: (1) A *sleuth* of bears; (2) A *swarm* of bees; (3) A *herd* or *bunch* of cattle; (4) A *clattering* of choughs; (5) A *trip* of dottrell; (6) A *flight* of doves or swallows; (7) A *gang* of elk;

(8) A *plump* of wild fowl; (9) A *skulk* of foxes; (10) A *flock* of geese; (11) A *brood* of grouse; (12) A *cast* of hawks; (13) A *siege* of herons; (14) A *shoal* of herrings; (15) A *sounder* of hogs; (16) A *pride* of lions; (17) A *troop* of monkeys; (18) A *watch* of nightingales; (19) A *drove* of oxen; (20) A *covey* of partridges; (21) A *muster* of peacocks; (22) A *nide* of pheasants; (23) A *stand* of plovers; (24) A *bevy* of quails; (25) A *building* of rooks; (26) A *wisp* of snipe; (27) A *shoal* of sharks; (28) A *herd* of swine; (29) A *pod* or *school* of whales; (30) A *pack* of wolves.

commence. See BEGIN.

communiqué. Pronounce this kom''mu''ni''ke' (*e* as in "prey" and *qu* as in "quay"), *not*, as frequently pronounced by persons who associate the word with *unique* and ignore the accent, kom'yu-neek, *nor* kom'yu-ni-kwey. Compare QUESTIONNAIRE.

company, firm. Two words that may be used with verbs in the singular or the plural, depending on the context. In the sentence, "*This* firm *has* announced its dividend," *this* is distinctly singular. *Not* "*this* firm *have*," but one may say, "*the* firm *have*," and "*the* company *have*," when one refers to the different members of a firm or of a company distributively. See COLLECTIVE NOUN.

confiscate. A word that should always be applied to concrete not to abstract terms. The teacher may *confiscate* the pupil's pocket-knife because he whittled away at his desk. Formerly, one might *confiscate* slaves as property; to-day, no one speaks of *confiscating* a child, inasmuch as *confiscation* designates "the appropriation of *private property* as forfeited to the public use or treasury, especially because of the wrong-doing of the owner." By certain State laws, a cow, a horse, or any other animal that has strayed upon the public domain and damaged it, may be *confiscated*, after the stray animal has been impounded and the impoundage fee has not been paid by the owner.

connectives. These are the little words that are indispensable to us in the forming of our sentences correctly. Avoid "help choose," "help get," "help move." The dropping of *to* in such constructions as these has become common in English. Joseph Conrad ("The Secret Agent," p. 11) writes: "Put to help wash the dishes." No one who aims to write good English would write, "hope get," "try get," "want get." He would write, "Help *to* wash the dishes"; "Hope *to* get an increase of salary"; "Try *to* get money"; "Want *to* get ahead."

Avoid such locutions as, "come Tuesday"; "stay dinner"; "help pay for the work." Here substitute, "Come *on* Tuesday"; "stay *to* dinner"; "help *to* pay for the work."

In an editorial article referring to Viscount Haldane, which appeared in a London daily, the following sentence may be found: "And finally, he was *let pass* into private life." This is horrible; substitute, "he was *left to* pass . . ." or "allowed to retire."

We still teach our children that a sentence must contain a subject and a predicate, yet an offense

of modern journalism is the writing of incomplete sentences. Here is a sentence of the kind: "The long ribbon of khaki wound its way through the narrow lane of interminable length. The men footsore and weary. *And* the flies. *And* the dust. But cheerful, notwithstanding. At last the river came in sight. But the ford marked on the map. None."

Why perpetrate such slovenly English? Undoubtedly, "The men *were* footsore and weary, *tormented by the flies*, and *choked by* the dust, but *they were* cheerful notwithstanding *all*. The river *came* into sight, but the ford marked on the map *was not there*."

consensus of opinion. Sometimes condemned as unjustifiable tautology but accepted as standard English. *Consensus* in its original sense means "feeling together." If this does not indicate *opinion* it certainly connotes unanimity. While the phrase may have been condemned by some purists as apparently tautological, *consensus of opinion* is good English; there may be *consensus* of evidence, force, function, opinion, thought, etc.

contagious. See INFECTIOUS.

contingent. See ACCIDENTAL.

contract. See ACQUIRE.

covey. Not to be confused with *convoy*. A *covey* is a flock of quail or partridges, a *convoy* is an armed guard assigned to protect persons or goods in an unfriendly territory. Not as recently printed in a daily paper—"Birds not plentiful; long-continued drought thinned out the *convoys*."

cuckoo. Recent slang, reviving an old English use of the word, for a blockhead; simpleton; fool. Avoid it as vulgar and incorrect, for, in view of the labor-saving habits of the bird, the cuckoo is no fool.

D

dahlia. Pronounce this word *dah'lia* or *day'lia*. The difference of pronunciation is a national characteristic. In the United States the first is used; in Great Britain, the second. The word, being derived from *Dahl*, the name of a Swedish botanist, is correctly pronounced with a broad *a* in the first syllable.

dandy. A word derived from the Old French, *dandin*, which means "simpleton," "ninny," *dandy* is a contraction of *dandiprat* (originally spelled *dandyprat*), "an insignificant or contemptible fellow," and should not be used to indicate some praiseworthy quality. Avoid such expressions as "a *dandy* hat"; "*dandy* time"; say, rather, "a *pretty* hat," "an *enjoyable* time."

data (*plural*). A word almost always used in the plural; hence, it is frequently misused for **datum** (*singular*), something given (as facts, records, etc.). Say, "We had not sufficient *data* (*not* "datums") to determine the cost"; "Are your *data* ready?" *not* "Is your *data* ready?" but "Is the *datum* ready." See MEMORANDUM and INTRODUCTORY, pp. 5-6.

de facto, de jure. Two Latin phrases. The first means "actually or really existing or done," and is to be distinguished from *de jure*, which means "by right of law, rightfully, or legally."

de luxe. A much overworked French phrase meaning "of luxurious or superfine quality." Applied originally to books printed and bound in exquisite taste, the term is losing its force by the very diversity of its modern application, which ranges from railway-trains to cabaret service.

demobilized. Place the main stress on the second syllable, de-mo'bil-ized, and utter the whole word. Avoid *demobbed* as a vulgarism.

demonstrate. Pronounced dem'onstrate, *not* de-mon'strate. Both pronunciations occur in Shakespeare, but the first is preferred in the United States; the second is standard in the United Kingdom.

detestation. See HATRED.

different. In writing about this word, most purists have imagined vain things. *Different to* and *different from* are both in good usage, the first in England, the second in the United States. *Different from* dates from 1590 (Shakespeare, "Comedy of Errors"); *different to*, from Thomas Dekker, 1603; thereafter came the following: *Different against*, Heywood, 1624; *different than*, Digby, 1644; *different with*, Monmouth, 1649. Then came a reversion to *different from* by Addison, 1711, with *different to* revived by Fielding, 1737, who was followed by Goldsmith with *different than* in 1769. *Different against* and *different with* are obsolete. As to which of the other phrases to use, everything depends upon the context.

digest. The dictionaries recognize two pronunciations for this word, one for the noun, *dai'jest*, another for the verb, *di-jest'*, but the modern tendency is to break down these distinctions, as has been done with the words *cement* and *rise* (noun and verb). The *i* in *digest* is the accented diphthongal *ai* as in "aisle," and *not* the unaccented *i* heard in *digestion*, which has the sound of *i* in *habit*. One may avoid mental *indigestion* (pronounced *in-di-jes'tchun*) by reading *The Literary Digest* (dai'jest).

dilemma. A situation in which a choice between alternatives is necessary. Therefore, avoid "alternative *dilemma*" as a pleonastic construction, which reference to the origins of these two words, in the Latin and the Greek, clearly shows. Thus, to speak of an "alternative *dilemma*" is the equivalent of speaking of an "alternative alternative," yet an eminent divine wrote to a merciless critic, "I have no desire to empale another on the dreadful horn of an *alternative dilemma*." See ALTERNATIVE.

discriminate. See INDIVIDUALIZE.

distress. See AFFLICTION.

diva. A word designating a female operatic singer of celebrity. It should be pronounced dee'va, *not* dai'va—the i as in "machine," *not* ai as in "aisle."

dive, plunge. Distinguish between these words. A *dive* is "a plunge head foremost into water by running from a spring-board and with propulsion

added on reaching the water"; a *plunge* is "a standing-dive made head-first from a firm take-off, free from spring."

done, did. *Done* must never be used for *did*. Avoid "I *done* it"; "That's what I *done*," and "I *done* that" as illiterate. Use *did* instead of *done* in every one of these sentences.

don't. As a form of the third person singular, in the indicative mode, "don't" is erroneous. *Not* "She *don't* like him," but "She *doesn't* like him"; *not* "He *don't* care to go," but "He *doesn't* care to go." Although "*Don't*," in the imperative mode, has been in use in English nearly two hundred and fifty years, purists still consider it a colloquial contraction, and "*Do not*" is preferred. In his first comedy, "Love in a Wood," the gallant William Wycherley introduced it with "*Don't* speak so loud" (act iii, sc. 2). It is widely used by novelists. Dickens employed it freely—the very frequency of its use is likely to place it on a higher plane, but the purists still stigmatize it.

dottrell, dove. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (5) and (6).

double negative. In English there is a rule that runs, "Two negatives are equivalent to an affirmative: that is, they nullify each other." But this does not always apply. Says Campbell in his "Rhetoric" (p. 160): "Many terms and idioms may be common, which, nevertheless, have *not* the general sanction, *no*, *nor* even the sanction of those that use them." Nevertheless, double negatives should be shunned whenever a blunder is sensed in their use.

The double negative dates from Chaucer's time—

> "So lowely, *ne* so trewely yow serve
> Nyl *non* of 'hem as I shal til I sterve."
>
> —*Troylus and Cryseyde*, lib. v, st. 25.

Shakespeare and Roger Ascham both made use of it; the first, frequently, as in "Romeo and Juliet" (act iv, sc. 1),

> "A sudden day of joy
> That thou expect'st *not*, *nor* I look'd *not* for."

> "Give not me counsel; *nor* let *no* comforter delight mine ear."—SHAKESPEARE, *Much Ado About Nothing*, act v, sc. 1.

The second, in "Toxophilus," where he makes use of the expression, "No, *nor* I think I *never* shall." Pope's "Epitaph of P. P." the parish clerk, contains an example of this use in a derisive couplet from his pen:

> "Do all we can, Death is a man
> Who *never* spareth *none*."

In the Saxon tongue this idea was carried often beyond the double to the *triple*, and even occasionally to the *quadruple*, negative. But in modern English expressions of this kind are almost entirely obsolete among the educated, though they are frequently heard in the conversation of the man in the street. The only occasion when a *double* or *triple negative* is permissible is when it is an independent repetition used to emphasize the negation; as

> "He will *never* consent, *not* he, *no*, *never*, *nor* I *neither!*"
>
> "*No*, *not* for an hour."—*Galatians*, ch. ii, v. 5.

Avoid "I *don't* know *nothing* about it," as vulgar.

drink, drank. The present participle of *drink* is *drinking;* the imperfect or past tense of *drink* is *drank*, and the past participle is *drunk*. Say, "I have *drunk*," not "I have *drank*"; but "I *drank*," which is correct when the imperfect or past tense is intended.

E

educated. Is "People come here to *get educated*" grammatically perfect? *People* is commonly used of a large number of persons; *persons* of a small number of people. In the sentence quoted *get* is used colloquially to mean "become (what one was not before)," by ellipsis of a reflexive pronoun ("themselves"). Such use of *get* should be avoided. Say, rather, "People come here to *get an education*," or "*be educated*."

egoist, egoistic, egotist, egotistic. Distinguish between these words. *Egoistic* has a wider scope than *egotistic*, but it includes the meaning of that word. *Egotistic* describes one given to or characterized by *egotism*, while *egotism* is the habit or practise of thinking or talking too much of oneself; self-exaltation. An *egoist* is one who advocates or practises *egoism*. He is *egoistic* who is characterized by inordinate regard for himself or by *egoism*, the doctrine that the supreme end of human conduct is the happiness of self, or the pursuit of self-interest. An *egotist* is one who abounds in egotism or who talks freely about himself.

egregious. Many persons think that the word *egregious* means "ridiculous, foolish, or ignorant." This may have been due to an ironical use of the word, which means literally, "out flock," that is, "eminent, excellent, renowned, remarkably good, significant, great." In "Cymbeline," Shakespeare wrote of "an Italian fiend . . . *egregious* murtherer"; Milton of "*egregious* liars and impostors." Who shall say that Shakespeare did not mean a murderer above the common type, or that Milton did not refer to a *notorious* liar?

On "*egregious* blunder," modern interpretation has put the meaning "gross or outrageous mistake," yet interpreted literally, an *egregious* blunder is an *unusual* blunder rather than an *outrageous* one.

ei or ie. The following lines elucidate correct usage:

When *ei* and *ie* both spell *e*
How can we tell which it shall be?
Here is a rule you may be*lie*ve,
That never, never will dece*ive*,
And all such troubles will reli*eve*,
A simpler rule you can't perce*ive*.
It is not made of many p*ie*ces,
To puzzle daughters, sons, or n*ie*ces,
Yet with it all the trouble ceases.
After *C*, an *E* apply;
After other letters *I*.

—TUDOR JENKS.

elicit, illicit. Distinguish between these words. To *elicit* is to draw out, as by some attraction or inducement, bring to light; as, to *elicit* information by inquiry; *elicit* a reply. *Illicit* designates that which is forbidden by law; as, "The profiteers have reaped *illicit* gains."

elk. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (7).

encore. *Not* en'kor but on''kor'.

energy, force. Discriminate between these words. *Energy* signifies the power of producing positive results. The idea of activity is associated with *energy* (Gr. *energein*, to operate inwardly); the idea of capability is connected with *force*. Work involves the expenditure of *energy*, actual or potential, of which the labor done is the measure. Work is necessarily done whenever a *force* acts upon a moving point in the direction of its motion, and may then be measured by the product of the *force* into the distance through which the point moves while it acts.

enjoy. See APPRECIATE.

especial, special. The distinction between these words is often a fine one. *Especial* singles out a quality or an object from others of the same kind; as, an *especial* charm. *Special* conveys the idea of having some particular or remarkable characteristic; as, a *special* announcement.

evacuated. Commonly misused of persons instead of places. *Not* "The wounded were kept in the barn until *they* could be conveniently *evacuated*." Substitute "it" for "they," for the *barn* was evacuated *not the wounded*.

expect, hope, suspect. The word *expect* is very widely misused not only for *think*, *believe*, *suppose*, but also for *suspect*, and *hope*. Avoid, "I *expect* he will pass his examination, but I do not think he will." Here *hope* is meant. *Expect* is often confused with *hope* even by persons of education. A young man *hopes* to live many years; an old man *expects* to die in a few years. A farmer who is looking forward to a bountiful harvest will say, "I *expect* to have a good crop," while he really only *hopes* to have it.

To-day *suspect* invariably implies the imagination of something wrong or undesirable concerning a person or thing; so that, unless there is something wrong, the word should not be used. This idea, however, is due to the fact that *suspect* is also used of things with the sense of *imagine* or *fancy* (something) to be possible or likely. The use should not be applied to persons. One may *suspect* identity, poisoning, villainy. Used as a noun, *suspect* is applied to a suspicious character, one possibly guilty of crime, or a suspicious thing.

expiate. See ATONE.

exploiting. Avoid such expressions as "The *exploiting* of a worthy product." Products that are worthy need no exploiting. *Worthy* is said of persons, abstractions, or, rarely, of material things. To *exploit* is to bring out for one's own advantage without regard to the rights of others; as, some capitalists *exploit* the people; some merchants *exploit* their goods by fatuous advertisements.

F

female. An offensive term when used to designate a woman. Such use is a survival of an old English practise now regarded with disfavor by careful speakers and writers.

In the following sentence *female* is appropriately used as an expression of contempt: "They are no ladies. The only word good enough for them is the word of opprobrium—*females*." The sex are of the *feminine* gender. But *female* is correctly used also as the correlative of *male*, whether the latter be expressed or not; as, "Statistics of population show that the excess of *females* to *males* is as 7 is to 4 in England to-day."

firm. See COMPANY.

flown. This word is the past participle of *fly*, but is occasionally misused as the past participle or the past tense of *flow*, of which *flowed* is both past participle and past tense: *flow, flowing, flowed.* The parts of *fly* are *flying, flown*, and the past tense is *flew*.

Jean Ingelow wrote:

"So far the shallow flood had *flown*
Beyond the accustomed leap of landing."
—*A Story of Doom.*

foreigner. Pronounced for'in-er (i as in "pin"), *not* fo-rain'er.

forwardance. An erroneous substitute for *forwarding*, used by persons who crave for novelty. The correct verbal substantive for the action of the verb *forward* is *forwarding*. Say, "We thank your for the prompt *forwarding* of the instrument," not *forwardance*.

fowl, fox. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (8) and (9).

fracas. A word sometimes misused. *Not* "He was wounded in the *fracas*"; say, rather, "... *during* the fracas," for he was wounded while it took place. A *fracas* (pronounced fra'ka' or, rarely, fray'kas) is a brawl, riot, disturbance, *not* a part of man's anatomy.

fresh. This word in the sense of "green, inexperienced; hence, bold and lacking the sense of propriety; presumptuous; rude," although originally Old English, occurring in Shakespeare, has been preserved as modern American slang—an expressive, but an undesirable locution. Avoid "Don't be so *fresh*"; "You *fresh* thing!" etc., as vulgarisms.

G

gape. Pronounce it to rime with *ape, cape, nape, rape, tape*, etc., *not* with *cap, lap, map*.

garage. Pronounce it ga-razh'—both a's as in "arm" and z as in "azure." The pronunciations gar'ij and gar'ej (e as in "they") are illiterate.

genuine. Pronounced jen'yu-in, *not* jen'yu-ine—the final syllable of the word rimes with "pin," *not* with "pine."

get me. A vulgarism for *understand. Not* "Do you *get me?*" but "Do you *understand* me?"

glaour. Pronounced *jowr.*

gibber, gibberish. Pronounced gib'er, gib'er-ish, *not* jib'er, jib'er-ish, a pronunciation frequently heard.

Although Webster records jib'er as the present usage of the United States, it is not supported by contemporaries. This pronunciation is common in Southern England, while gib'er is heard more frequently from the Thames northward. It prevails in Scotland. The pronunciation jib'er-ish—based probably on the verb—also heard, is not recorded by the lexicographers.

> "This *gibberish* (unintelligible or incoherent speech), which in the weakness of human understanding serves so well to palliate men's ignorance, and cover their errors, comes by familiar use amongst those of the same tribe to seem the most important part of language."—LOCKE, *Essays on Human Understanding*, vol. ii, c. 10.

girl. Pronounced to rime with "whirl." *Not* gal, goil, or gel, but gurl.

glides. In colloquial English speech, these occur according to the rapidity with which words are spoken, and are in general undesirable. They are seldom or never heard in formal utterance, and careful enunciation eliminates them. Avoid *canchew* ("can't you"); *doncher* ("don't you"), etc.

God. Give to the o in this word the sound it has in the word "not." Do *not* say gard or gawd. This simple, homely Anglo-Saxon word is not the ineffable name that some of our churchmen try to make it.

goose, grouse. See COLLECTIVE NOUN (10) and (11).

grief. See AFFLICTION.

grits, groats. Distinguish between these words. The plural *grits* is correctly used when the intention is to describe grain much like coarse cornmeal mush. *Groats* is used to designate hulled or crushed oats or wheat, or fragments of wheat larger than *grits.* Both words are correctly used with a verb in the plural, but in the cant of the grain trade they are used with a verb in the singular.

grouch, groucher; grouse, grouser. Recent colloquialisms for *grumble* and *grumbler;* the first two peculiar to the United States, the last two, to Great Britain: coined with no other apparent object than to avoid the appropriate terms.

gunwale. Although this is still the usual spelling, the word is pronounced gun'nel by persons familiar with boating and nautical terms.

guy. When used to mean a person or an individual, is vulgar. "Slick *guy,*" "clever *guy,*" "some *guy,*" are indications of a debased mind.

H

hadn't ought. Erroneous for "ought not." "Who was it that described the Mason and Dixon line as the line that separates the people who say *you all* from those who say *hadn't ought?*"—BRYAN CALLAHAN in *The Sun*, New York, September 15, 1920. See YOU ALL.

hammer. Used to mean "subject to a tongue-lashing; find fault with; nag," a vulgarism for *rail at, scold*, which are to be preferred. It owes its origin to the figurative use of *hammer*, "to drive (into a person's head) by persistent effort"; as, to *hammer* common sense into the head of a dunce. See KNOCK.

has had, has been. Take care to use the right verb in the right place and so avoid Mrs. Crank's blunder. "I see Briggs *has had* his wife killed," she remarked to her work-weary spouse, only to elicit from him the reply, "Not a bad idea." She meant "I see Briggs's wife *has been* killed."

hatred, detestation. *Hatred* is a bitter aversion, usually actuated by a desire to injure, to weaken, or destroy its object. Thus, *hate* is intense and lasting. *Detestation* implies aversion caused by disapproval; hence, is intense dislike. To *detest* any one is to *hate* him intensely. These two words approach as nearly to synonyms as it is possible for words to do.

have got to. A locution frequently condemned where *got* is sometimes superfluous. We *have* to breathe, to sleep, to eat, and to do things generally, and these things we do willingly enough, but there are many things that we *have got to* do that are done unwillingly. We *have got to* die for one. The things that we *have* all *got to* do are not all pleasant things, yet we *have got to* do them or take the consequences.

Got is commonly supposed to imply "obtained." It is used properly when it has the sense of "acquired," "procured," or the like. It is frequently redundant, yet in some constructions is permissible. "The donkey *has got* long ears"; wrong, for he did nothing to *acquire* or *procure* them; but the greyhound *got* the hare (which he was chasing)—*caught*, however, would be preferable. Yet how often do we hear parents impress an unpleasant duty upon their children in such a phrase as, "John, you've *got to do* your lessons," which is colloquial, if not vulgar.

hawk. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (12).

he, him. Use these words with care: "I knew that it was *he*," not *him*, following the rule that requires a noun or pronoun in the predicate, corresponding to the subject and meaning the same thing as the subject, to be in the nominative case. "She knew it to be *him*," not *he*, following the rule that if the infinitive of any copulative verb has a subject in the objective case the noun or pronoun following such infinitive must also be in the objective case.

hegira. Pronounced hej'i-ra, *not* he-jai'ra (**ai** as in "aisle").

hero, heroine, heroism. Pronounce the first, hee'ro; the second, her'o-in; the third, her'o-izm.

heroin. A drug—pronounced he-ro'in.

heron, herring, hog. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (12), (13), and (14).

hope. See EXPECT.

I

I. *Not* "Between you and *I*," but "... you and *me*." But, "Who will speak?" "*I* (will speak, understood)," *not* "*Me* will speak."

idea. Have persons of English birth the correct enunciation of this word when they pronounce it as if it were written *idear*, or is this mere affectation? It is an affectation not restricted to persons born in the United Kingdom. In New York City speech "r" is often inserted or added in words when none ought to be heard. The late Henry James, writing on the subject of cultivated speech, drew attention to the fact that "the very instructors of youth sometimes talk of *California-r-oranges*, of *Cuba-r*, of *Atalanta-r* in Calydon, and of the *idea-r-of* any intimation that their example in these respects may not be immaculate." In England on a wet day, one frequently hears, "Put your *umbrella-r-up*."

illicit. Pronounced i-lis'it, *not* il'i-sit. See ELICIT.

illusion. See ALLUSION.

illustrate. Pronounced i-lus'trate in the United States, but il'us-trate in Great Britain.

imbecile. Pronounced im'be-sil, *not* im-be-sile'.

imbroglio. As the g is silent, pronounce it im-bro'lyo.

inauspicious. See AUSPICIOUS.

incidental. See ACCIDENTAL.

individualize. This word should not be used for *discriminate* or *particularize*. One *discriminates* between persons or things. Avoid such constructions as, "When every line is of such high standard of excellence, it seems superfluous to *individualize*"; first, because that which is excellent excels in quality to a high degree; secondly, because *individualize* is more commonly associated with persons; *particularize*, with things. "The characteristics of a literary production *individualize* its author." "The peculiar properties of goods *particularize*, that is, *indicate* their qualities."

infectious, contagious. Terms commonly misused. An *infectious* disease is one communicated, as by contact or through the medium of air, water, or clothing. A *contagious* disease is one that is communicated from person to person by contact, direct or indirect. Whatever acts by *contagion* acts immediately by direct personal contact. *Contagion*, therefore, is correctly applied only to particular diseases. That which acts by *infection* acts gradually and indirectly through the medium

of a third body, as clothes, etc., when infected. *Infection* is all-embracing, and may be applied to every disease that is transmittable from one person to another. Diseases that are *contagious* or *infectious* are termed transmissible diseases.

Ingénue. *Not* in'je-new, but as a French word pronounced correctly *an"zhe"nu'* (*a* as in "at," *z* as in "azure," *e* as in "prey," *u* as in "Dumas"). The term in general designates a young woman who is artless, ingenuous, or innocent.

Injury. See ACCIDENT.

Insignia. A word frequently used nowadays with a verb in the singular instead of in the plural. The correct singular is *insigne;* but *insignia* is erroneously used as the singular with the plural form *insignias*, and may be found in the writings of Washington Irving, Wellington, and Mary Kingsley.

Irony, sarcasm. Distinguish between these words. *Irony* is the saying of one thing, that the reverse may be understood. Derived from the Greek *eirōneia*, which means dissimulation; irony is disguised *satire* and often censures by feigned approval or condemns by pretense of admiration. Irony is either mild or cutting. *Sarcasm* is a form of irony in which the speaker is actuated by enmity or scorn. Being derived from the Greek *sarkasmos*, which means, literally, "a biting of the flesh," it is usually cutting and reproachful, and is a kind of personal allusion which is characterized by spite or ill will. Sarcasm is also "the contemptuous and derisive expression of uncongeniality with the character, conduct, belief, principles, or statements of another."

K

keen. See ACUTE.

kick. Used to designate an act of violent objection, a vulgarism for *protest*.

kike, kyke. An unpardonable vulgarism in the cant of the clothing trade. The word *kike* is an adaptation from the Scottish *keek*, which designates "One who peeps; especially in the clothing trade, a person engaged by a garment-maker to obtain the latest styles from a rival concern, that he may make up his goods in imitation, but for sale at a lower price." It is used to-day in a derogatory sense, indicating a low standard of honor.

kimono. Pronounced kim'o-no by the Japanese, but ki-mo'no in the United States.

kind of. There are some constructions which allow the use of the expression "kind of," such as, "What *kind of* man is he?" but this should not be confused with the meaning "somewhat" or "rather," as in the sentence, "It looks *kind of* good," a vulgarism for ". . . *rather* good." *Not* "He is *kind of* tired," but ". . . *somewhat* tired"; nor "I am *kind of* annoyed about it," but ". . . *a little* annoyed."

knock. Used as meaning "find fault with," a vulgarism for *decry*, *defame*. Compare HAMMER.

knocked up. In the United States, a euphemism of the underworld for enceinte. In Great Britain, used commonly to mean fatigued, tired out, weary.

know. "I am glad to know you" is a colloquial formula for "I am glad to make your acquaintance." The word "know," in this sense, is defined as "to be *thoroughly* acquainted with," and one obviously can not be thoroughly acquainted with a person one meets for the first time. The form "I am glad to meet you" is preferable.

know as. Illiterate in such a sentence as "I do not *know as* they will come to-day." Say, "I do not *know that* . . . "

L

like as. This phrase means "in the same way as," but has been condemned as tautological, yet has ample literary support. "*Like as* a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." *Psalm* ciii, 13; Coleridge, "She is now rising *like as* a sun, so shines she in the East."

like I do. A phrase so common that it may be doubted if protests against it are not made in vain. The full phrase was *like as I do.* Our forebears dropped the *like* and left us "as I do." Their sons evidently feel that they have an equal right, and so drop the *as*, but restore the *like.* See LIKE AS.

lion. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (16).

listen! An inane admonition far too frequently used by persons speaking into telephone transmitters, to other persons holding receivers to their ears. What else is one who stands or sits with a receiver to one ear doing but listening?

love. Often loosely used as a synonym of *like.*

"I just *love* cake; it's *awfully* nice!" cried Peggy, taking a large bite.

"You should not say you *love* cake," chided her mother. "Say you *like* it. And don't use *awfully* when you mean *very;* don't say *nice* when you mean *good;* now, dear, repeat it."

And Peggy heartlessly said: "I *like* cake; it is *very good,*" then continued, "But, mother, it sounds exactly as if I were talking about bread."

M

magnificent. A term connoting grand or majestic qualities, not to be associated with anything reduced. Avoid the "*magnificent* reduction" of dry-goods-store advertising, as a contradiction in terms. That which is *magnificent* is superb; that which is *reduced* is depreciated or diminished in value. Say, rather, "marked reduction," for the excessive use of hyperbole, by exceeding truth, always misrepresents.

majority. See PLURALITY.

make. See ACT (*verb*).

make up. An English idiom of wide meaning. One may *make up* a parcel, a prescription, or a deficiency; *adjust* a quarrel; *compensate* a loss; *determine* a course to follow; or *concoct*, as a story; *lay out*, as type into a page; *prepare* one's face for the public, or *repair* a hedge. The wide range of this idiom may be illustrated by the following domestic colloquy:

"May I ask if you have *made up your mind* to stay in?" asked the henpecked husband, after a tiff.

"No," replied the determined wife, "I have *made up my face* to go out."

mankind. This noun should be used with a verb in the *singular*, not in the plural. "Mankind *has* (*not* have) suffered bitterly through the ambitions of the military class." But Shakespeare used both the singular and the plural. In "The Tempest" he wrote, "How beauteous *mankinde is*" (act v, sc. 1), and in "A Winter's Tale," "Should all despair That have revolted wives, the tenth of *Mankind* Would hang *themselves*" (act i, sc. 2).

mayonnaise. Pronounced may"o-naze' in the United States, but mah"yon"naze' in France.

meadow. See PASTURE.

memoranda. Some persons persistently use this as a singular and *memorandas* as the plural. *Memorandum* is the singular and *memoranda*, or *memorandums*, is the plural. "Take *this memorandum* to the manager, and *these memoranda* to the secretary." Compare DATUM.

minute. Distinguish between the pronunciations of the adjective and the noun. The adjective is pronounced my'nute; the noun, min'it. *Not*, "The my'nutes of a company's meetings," but "the min'its."

mobilize. Correctly pronounced mo'bil-ize, *not* mob'i-lize.

monkey. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (17).

more and more. The position of adverbial phrases determines the sense in mind. In the sentence, "He *more and more* learned to appreciate the benefits of freedom," the emphasis is placed upon the increased learning, but in "He learned to appreciate *more and more* the benefits of freedom," the emphasis is upon the appreciation.

mutt. A vulgarism for dog, commonly used by persons who think less of their dogs than the dogs do of them.

N

neither. Is the following correct? "*Neither* of you *is* old in spirit or otherwise." The word *neither* indicates "not the one or the other addressed." Therefore, "Neither . . . *is*" is good English.

The correct correlative to use with *neither* is *nor*, and *not* "or." "He pursued *neither* the course of a trained diplomat *nor* the diplomacy of an astute politician."

Nemesis. Pronounced nem'e-sis, *not* ne-mee'sis.

nephew. Pronounced nef'yu in the United States, but nev'yu in Great Britain.

Newfoundland Pronounced new"fund-land' by the inhabitants and in the United States, but new-found'land in Great Britain.

New York. Pronounced correctly when the last word rimes with "cork." Noo Yark is a provincial abomination.

nice. A much-abused word that originally meant "foolish," "simple," "ignorant." Then it came to mean "particular," "fastidious," "finical," "foolishly hard to please." Now it has acquired the sense of "agreeable," "dainty," "pleasing," or "refined," and is applied indiscriminately to a pie, a sermon, a young man—in fact, to almost everything.

nightingale. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (18).

O

oblique. Pronounced ob-leek', *not* ob-like', or by analogy one might be justified in pronouncing *unique*, yu-nike'.

obvious. Sometimes erroneously used for *necessary*, as, "In an industrial community, what is more *obvious* than to make children acquainted with modern industry." That which is *obvious* is "evident without reasoning or investigation," and that is not what is meant here. Substitute *necessary* as the better word to express the thought.

of. Pronounced ov—the only word in English in which *f* is given the sound of v.

off. Pronounced of (o as in *or*, f as in *fat*), *not* orf.

often. Frequently mispronounced of-ten'. correctly of'n. No pronouncing dictionary sounds the *t* in this word or in *Christmas*, or *ostler*.

Olympiad. Correctly, the interval of four years between two successive celebrations of the Olympic games. Of modern revivals, used erroneously to designate the games themselves.

one or more. What is the difference in meaning between *one or more* and *more than one?*

One or more connotes the presence of one and the possibility of there being more than one present. *More than one* definitely indicates the presence of a plural number.

only. The position of this little word has proved a pitfall for the unwary. We often hear such a phrase as, "I was *only* saying the other day," when the speaker really intended, "I was saying *only* the other day." A newspaper reports that "When bicycles were first introduced, men *only* rode on them," which is good English if the intention was to restrict man's activity. This properly means that men only *rode on* the bicycles. that is, they did nothing else to or with them, such as clean or walk beside them, but the evident intention was to say that the bicycles were ridden

by men *only* and not by women. Thus, the clause should have read, "*only* men rode on them."

From Boston we learn:

Marie—"Well, dear, did you have a good month at the beach?" *Maude*—"Splendid. I was given seven engagement-rings, and *only* had to return three of them."

But the young ladies of Boston do not all speak so when they have "to return *only three*" rings out of seven received.

Jack—I give my seat only to pretty girls.

Bella—Then we'll only take them from handsome men.

The point revolves around the use of the word *only*, and it would be better to put it in its proper place in each sentence:

Jack—I give my seat to *only* pretty girls.

Bella—Then we'll take them from *only* handsome men.

opponent. Pronounced o-po'nent, *not* op'po-nent.

other. Sometimes omitted where it is essential to the meaning of the words used. For example, "Pure thread silk *hose*—quality *with which no stocking* at a similar price *can compare.*" The rule is that *when an object is compared* with different objects of the *same kind*, the fact must be indicated by the word *other* before the second term. But *it must not* be used when objects of *different kinds* are compared. In the sentence quoted the hose excepted is of necessity excluded through the use of the words "no stocking." But the intention was to say "no *other* stocking." A critic recently wrote, "This book is *superior to any work* on the subject that I have yet seen," but he intended to write, "This book is *superior to any other* work on the subject . . . " for, how can a work be superior to itself?

In *Mark* iv: 31, one reads: "It is a grain of mustard-seed . . . which is less than *all the seeds* that be in the earth." If so, then the mustard-seed is less than itself, for it is included in "all the seeds."

overflown. An erroneous form: *overflowed* is correct. This verb is a compound formed of *over* and *flow* (which see above). In the following *overflowed* should have been used:

"The rapid stream had *overflown* its banks."
—WILLIAM BLACK.

"The river rushing with a furious and fearful stream had *overflown* its banks."—ALFRED WILLS.

overly. Such expressions as "*overly* nice," "*overly* particular," are archaic or colloquial. Say, "over nice" or "too nice," "over particular" or "most particular." If one can be *nice*, another *nicer*, and a third *nicest* of all, then one may be "*over* nice."

ox. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (19).

P

pains. "To be at pains" does not mean "to find it difficult," for the phrase is synonymous with "to take pains," and means "to take trouble, or care, to make the effort, or the exertion on anything, or in accomplishing or attempting to accomplish something." In a postscript to "Our Mutual Friend," Dickens wrote: "I was at *great pains* to conceal exactly what I was at *great pains* to suggest." Here the author means that he was compelled "to take trouble," not that he "found it difficult," to do what he had in mind.

pajamas. The preferred spelling in the United States; *pyjamas*, the spelling used in England. In the transliteration of Oriental words, there is often little choice among several forms which have practically the same sound. Down to the middle of the nineteenth century, this word was spelled also *paijamahs*, *pigammahs*, *peijammahs*, *piejamahs*, *pyjamahs;* yet there are some persons who contend that usage does not simplify spelling.

paradox. A statement *seemingly* absurd, so it is tautological when used as in the following:

> "This may *seem a paradox* but it is nevertheless a fact."—JOHN STUART MILL.
>
> "It is less *paradoxical* than it may *seem* . . ."
> —Sir HENRY HOLLAND.

To say that this or that statement "seems a paradox" is tantamount to saying it "*seems* a *seeming* absurdity," which is as absurd as Cicero's "clamorous silence."

particularize. See INDIVIDUALIZE.

partridge. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (20).

pasture, meadow. Discriminate carefully between these words. A *pasture* is a field used for grazing cattle. A *meadow* is a field producing grass which is mowed regularly for hay.

peacock. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (21).

perfected. On this word the stress is correctly placed on the first syllable, per'fected, *not* perfect'ed.

permit. See BENEFIT.

persuade, advise. Distinguish between these words. *Persuade* carries with it the sense of conviction; *advise*, that of recommendation. An author may succeed in *persuading* a publisher of the merits of his work; but the publisher *advises* him to cut it down.

pheasant. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (22).

pianist. Pronounced pi-an'ist or pee'a-nist, *not* pie'a-nist.

pick. Although defined "to irritate or tease with petty carping or fault-finding," *pick* in such phrases as "He *picked* at her," "Why *pick* on me?" is undesirable as bordering on the vulgar.

place, any place, no place, some place. To be used with great care. "I have met him *places*," writes Sunshine to Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson, writer of "Heart and Home Problems," in *The*

Altoona (Pa.) *Times-Tribune.* "If he loved you," Mrs. Thompson answers, "he would . . take you *places.* Never go *places* to meet a man."

The use of *place* objectively, without a preposition, or even adverbially, is a provincialism common in parts of the United States; as, "She is always wanting *to go places*"; "Can't I *go any place* (*anywhere*)?" "I must *go some place* (*somewhere*)"; "I can't find it *any place.*" All such forms are solecisms and should be avoided.

plover. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (23).

plurality, majority. Distinguish between these words. A *plurality* is the greatest of more than two numbers whether it is or is not a *majority* of the whole. It is used in politics to mean the excess of the highest number of votes cast for any one candidate over the next highest number.

A *majority* is the amount or number by which one group of things exceeds another group.

porcelain. Pronounced pors'lin *or* por'se-lane, *not* por'si-lin. Compare BARGAIN.

positively. In this word the stress should be put on the first syllable—pos'i-tive-ly, and *not on the third,* as is done frequently but erroneously in New York. *Not* pos-i-tive'ly.

practically. *Practically* means "through practical experience," or "so far as concerns practise." A word frequently misused, as the following sentences show.

"The Senator is *practically* at the point of death." Not "through practical experience," let us hope.

"The weather has been *practically* cold." Here "to all intents and purposes" is evidently meant.

"We were *practically* insulted by the German press." Possibly, for it had ample time for practise.

precedent, precedence. Discriminate carefully between these words. A *precedent* is an authoritative case, example, or instance; an established mode of procedure. *Precedence* is the act of preceding or going in advance of.

prepare, make. *Prepare,* from the Latin *præparo,* is "to get beforehand" or "take steps for the purpose of providing." *Make,* from the Saxon *macian,* is "to put together with art." In English, one *prepares* a dinner, but does not *make* it. Avoid, "I told my wife to *make* dinner," and if you want peace in the family say, "I asked my wife to *prepare* dinner." One may *make* tea, but *prepares* dinner. Compare ACT.

press. Usually construed as a singular, is sometimes used as a plural when plurality serves to express the thought. English is a virile language, and men will use it as best suits them to express their ideas. In "The Turkish *press are* unanimous in support, etc.," the writer considered the different members of the Turkish fourth estate distributively, and not collectively. Colton wrote, "The press *is* the foe of rhetoric," and Cowper:

"How shall I speak thee, or thy power address,
Thou god of our idolatry, the *Press*?
Thou fountain at which drink the good and wise;
Thou ever bubbling spring of endless lies."

presumptive, presumptuous. Distinguish carefully between these words. *Presumptive* means "giving rise to or founded on presumption, warranting inferences"; *presumptuous*, "unduly confident or bold; forward; impertinent." *Not*, as a British M. P. and ex-Food Controller confessed, "I once knew a young lady and was *presumptive* enough to take her to balls," but *presumptuous*.

promiscuous. Pronounced promis'cuous, *not* per'-miscuous, which is an erroneous construction due to inattention or ignorance. *Promiscuous*, in Latin *promiscuus*, from *promiscere*, to mingle, mix, signifies thoroughly mixed or mingled. *A promiscuous* audience is an audience consisting of all sorts and conditions of men and women.

proven. Commonly misused for *proved*, this word is a past participle used in Scottish law to indicate that according to the evidence (present) a person on trial is guilty (*proven* so) or not guilty (not *proven* so). A verdict of *not proven* has been held to indicate suspicion but *want of proof* of guilt. *Proved* indicates a past completed action; *proven* an action based on *facts present*.

Say, "He has *proved* himself a model employee," *not* "proven," for *proved* indicates that his past actions make him a model employee.

proximity. *Proximity* is said of being near. *Close proximity*, an idiom sometimes challenged, implies something closer than mere proximity, or nearness.

Q

quall. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (24).

quality. A word sometimes misused on the assumption that it implies excellence or desirable traits; as, "a writer remarkable for his *qualities* and his *defects*." A quality is a characteristic, distinguished as good or bad. A person of *excellent qualities* is one of sound morals.

questionnaire. A word adopted into the English language from the French. Always spelled correctly with double *n*—*questionnaire*, not *questionaire*. Pronounced correctly kes''chun''nare', *not* kwes''-chun''nare'. The correct English equivalent for this word is *questionary*, "a paper containing a series of questions bearing on some specific subject,"—a good enough word for any but those who cultivate an affectation for foreign words.

R

rational, reasonable. Distinguish between these words, for they are not synonymous. A *rational* woman is one who is able to exercise the faculty of reasoning—one mentally fit to reason. A *reasonable* woman is one governed by reason in acting or thinking—one whose powers of reasoning by

deduction or induction are habitually exercised. A *rational* person may be *unreasonable*, but a *reasonable* person is generally *rational*.

re. This is not an abbreviation of "referring" and should not be used as such. In law, *re* designates an action or matter, and is from the Latin *res*, thing. Its use should be restricted to that profession. The practise that some writers on commercial correspondence commend, of using the formula, "*Re* your letter of the 1st instant," claiming it to stand for "*Referring* to your letter, etc.," should be discouraged as not countenanced by reputable commercial practise.

relentless. Incapable of relenting, pitiless, as,

"Death is *relentless*, and will not be entreated."

"Few things can be more terrific than the voice of *relentless* criticism."

"The storm beat upon the shore with *relentless* fury."

Notwithstanding the fact that the genius of language has put the stamp of approval upon this term, it is of incorrect formation. The suffix *-less*, meaning "without," can be employed correctly only with nouns. Familiarity makes *relentless* less obnoxious to the uncritical ear than the equally objectionable terms *restless* and *tireless*. *Changeless*, *pitiless*, *homeless* are correct constructions, but *fadeless*, which has recently been condemned as an illiterate creation of an irresponsible advertiser of dry-goods, under the idea that it is formed from *fade* (verb) and *-less* (suffix), has a respectable ancestry, dating from about 1300. Its first use in English literature has been traced to Benlowes, "Flowers which into *fadeless* colors flow," 1652. Modern English usage favors *unfadable*.

reluctance. One frequently sees in print that "Mr. Blank confesses *to* a *reluctance* in regard to (whatever the particular matter may be)." Interpreted strictly, does not the position of the preposition make *reluctance* the recipient of a confession rather than the thing confessed? Certainly, "Mr. Blank confesses a *reluctance to*" is English.

remit. See BENEFIT.

reserve, reticence. These words are not synonymous. *Reserve* is the holding of oneself apart from others, the exercising of self-control or the restraining one's emotions, etc.; *reticence* is the habit of being *reserved in speech*. A *reticent* man need not be *reserved* in all things, although he may be so in speech.

reverence. See ADORE.

revue. A French word, of which the English equivalent is *review*, that means, among other things, "a retrospective survey or spectacle." The French word is pronounced re"vu' (*e* as in *moment* and *u* as in *Dumas*)—*not* rev'oo.

rook. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (25).

rule, ruler. Interchangeable words; but, in colloquial speech, *rule* indicates a foot rule, that is

to say, one marked off in inches and their subdivisions, and a *ruler*, a plain, unmarked implement for ruling lines. That the two words are interchangeable is due to the fact that an article that serves both purposes, being plain on one side and marked off in inches and their subdivisions on the other, is in common use in the United States, but the distinction formerly made still survives in such expressions as, "A two-foot *rule*," "A three-foot *rule*," etc., *ruler* being used for the implement by means of which one rules lines.

S

sacrifice. Sometimes used in the cant of the dry-goods trade with *enormous* to describe a sale at unusually low prices. When so used, *enormous sacrifice* is hyperbolical, for a *sacrifice* is, in commerce, "a reduction in prices so great as to leave *little* or *no profit*, or *involve a loss*," and *enormous* is "excessive or extraordinary in amount or degree." Thus, when applied to goods offered for sale, to use *enormous sacrifice* is to express extravagant folly that may entice but does not deceive, and is, therefore, lacking in common sense.

same, similar. The word *same* should not be used in substitution for *it*, as is now done too frequently in commercial correspondence. If "the same" is correctly used, a noun is implied; as, "It is *the same* (referring to an illness) as he suffered from." Do not say, "Tell me what you wish, and *the same* (meaning *it*) will be attended to." Distinguish carefully between *same* and *similar*, for *same* is often used where *similar* is the proper word. One may eat *similar* food from the *same* bill of fare at luncheon and dinner, but not the *same* soup, the *same* fish, the *same* roast, and the *same* sweets. A gale blowing to-day with a velocity of fifty miles an hour is *similar* to, but is not the *same*, as the one that blew with a velocity of fifty miles a year ago, although it has the *same* velocity. Avoid "The *same* identical thing itself" as an absurd or ignorant attempt at emphasis.

see! The iteration and reiteration of this little word, for emphasis, common with the man in the street, can not be too vigorously condemned.

> "I went to the Hippodrome. *See!* And saw Houdini. *See!* He gave a wonderful show. *See!*

"As a matter of course, for the Great Extricator always does. But why *see! see!! see!!!* when you *saw* him?"

Avoid also, "Do you *see* what I mean?" when your intention is to say, "Do you understand me?"

seen, saw. *Seen* should never be used for *saw*. "I *saw* him," *not* "I *seen* him"; but "I *had seen* him" is good English, when the intention is to express action prior to some other previous action.

severity. See ACRIMONY.

shall and will. To use these words correctly apply the rules given in the accompanying table:

shall and will.—*Continued.*

To Express	In the First Person Use	In the Second Person Use	In the Third Person Use	Examples
1. A simple future*	shall	will	will	1. I *shall* be there to-morrow.
2. An uncertainty				2. Perhaps you *will* think of it.
3. A question				3. *Will* he go to-morrow?
4. An intention or a habit	will	will	will	4. I *will* (*it is my intention to*) send you something to-morrow. He *will* (*i.e., it is his habit to*) spend hours together in their company.
5. A promise: active	will	will	will	5. I *will* certainly call for you to-morrow.
5. A promise: passive	shall	shall	shall	He *shall* be punished.
6. *Must*, as a future	shall	shall	shall	6. He says I *shall* (*must*) go home to-morrow.
7. A duty	should	should	should	7. You *should* (*it is your duty to*) be obedient.

1. Generally before the verb *to be*, or any other neuter verb.

*" *Shall* " is also used as a *simple future* for the second and third persons when dependent on the action of an antecedent verb or clause; *e.g.*, I will take care that you (or he) *shall* not come too late for the train. If I wish it, they *shall* do it.

2. Consequently after the words *suppose, think, believe, hope, trust, apprehend, expect, perhaps, probably, doubt*, etc., etc.

7. *Should*, expressing a *duty*, is always used as a *present* tense (past *should have*).

shall and will.—*Continued.*

Bear in mind the following:

Will in the first person expresses (*a*) a determination, or (*b*) a promise.

(*a*) I *will* not go. = I have determined not to go.

(*b*) I *will* give it to you. = I promise to give it to you.

Will in the second person foretells: If you come at twelve o'clock you *will* find me at home.

Will in the second person, in questions, anticipates (*a*) a wish, or (*b*) an intention.

(*a*) (*b*) *Will* you go to-morrow? = Is it your wish or intention to go to-morrow?

Will in the third person foretells, generally implying an intention at the same time, when the nominative is a rational being.

He *will* come to-morrow, signifies (*a*) what is to take place, and (*b*) that it is the intention of the person mentioned to come.

I think it *will* snow to-day intimates what is probable to take place.

Will must never be used in questions with nominative cases of the first person:

Will we come to-morrow? = Is it our intention or desire to come to-morrow? which is an absurd question.

Would is subject to the same rules as *Will.*

Would followed by *that* is frequently used (the nominative being expressed or understood) to express a wish:

Would that he had died before this disgrace befell him. = I wish that he had died before this disgrace befell him.

Would have, followed by an infinitive, signifies a desire to do or make:

I *would have* you think of these things. = I wish to make you think of these things.

Would is often used to express a custom:

He *would* often talk about these things. = It was his custom to talk of these things.

Shall in the first person foretells, simply expressing what is to take place:

I *shall* go to-morrow. Note that no probability or desire is expressed by *shall.*

Shall in the first person, in questions, asks permission:

Shall I read? = Do you wish me, or will you permit me, to read?

Shall in the second and third persons expresses (*a*) a promise, (*b*) a command, or (*c*) a threat:

(*a*) You *shall* have these books to-morrow. = I promise to let you have these books to-morrow.

(*b*) Thou *shalt* not steal. = I command thee not to steal.

(*a*) (*c*) He *shall* be punished for this. = I threaten or promise to punish him for this offense.

shall and will.—*Continued.*

Should is subject to the same rules as *shall*.

Should frequently expresses duty:

You *should* not do so. = It is your duty not to do so.

Should often signifies a plan:

I *should* not do so. = It would not be my plan to do so.

Should often expresses a supposition:

Should they not agree to the proposals, what must I do? = Suppose that it happen that they will not agree to the proposals, etc.

shark. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (27).

sharp. See ACUTE.

she. Distinguish carefully from *her*. "He knew that it was *she*," not *her*. "If you were *she*, would you go?" *not* "If you were *her*." Compare HE, HIM.

similar. See SAME.

slough. The correct way to pronounce this word depends entirely on the sense in which it is used. As a verb, meaning "to cast off, as dead tissue," it is pronounced sluf—u as in "but"; as a noun, it is pronounced slou—ou as in "out"—when the meaning is "a ditch, bog, or quagmire"; and slew, when a depression in a prairie is meant; but when "dead tissue" is intended, pronounce the noun in the same way as the verb—sluf.

snipe. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (26).

sorrow. See AFFLICTION.

sorry! A much overworked expression of regret, especially in England, where it is used not only by the shop-boy who drops a parcel in handing it to a customer, but also by the professional man's wife when she bumps into one accidentally. "I beg your pardon," "Pardon me," or "Excuse me," are preferable.

sort of. This phrase suggests in itself a muddle-headedness, or an indolent mind that refuses to grapple with its own conception—an indolence not extenuated by barefaced insinuation that precision of expression is unnecessary.

The phrase *sort of* is spreading daily. Its use instead of "rather" or "somewhat" should be avoided. Say, "She is *rather* weary, not "*sort of* weary"; "He is *somewhat* effeminate," rather than "*sort of* effeminate." Do not say, "A *sort of* box," if you mean "a box of special make." One may, however, separate different *sorts of* grain, or various *sorts of* merchandise. See KIND OF.

soup, drink or eat. Correct usage depends on the manner of service. If liquid food be taken from a spoon it is *eaten* with it (by its aid); but, if the same liquid food be served in a cup which is held to the lips it is drunk. Therefore, "*Eat* your soup" and "*Drink* you bouillon" are permissible under the conditions stated above.

spectatorium. A recently suggested word formed from the Latin *spectare*, "to look at, watch, see,"

and *-orium*, denoting " place for." This new term is used to designate the part of a building such as a motion-picture theater, that is occupied by the persons who have come to *see* what is shown upon the screen. Compare AUDITORIUM.

stratum. A bed or layer of rock or earth of which the plural is *strata* or *stratums* and *not* as a morning paper, noted for the excellent quality of its English, recently printed it, *stratas*. Compare DATA, MEMORANDA.

sucker. Not to be applied to persons, for such use to-day is stigmatized as slang by the dictionaries. Sir John Foster Fraser, the Scottish traveler and journalist, defines the American use of *sucker* as meaning " an ignorant fish that can be caught with the easiest bait." This definition is incorrect. In the vernacular of the United States a *sucker* is " an innocent victim of a designing and unscrupulous sharper "—not by any means an ignoramus, a greenhorn, or a booby. He is, besides, a creature of the remora type—a parasite or hanger-on; in fact, a sponger. This type is not exclusively American, however, for, according to Bishop Hall's " Chronicles " (1548), there were in England in Henry VI.'s time " Flatterers to the Kyng, *suckers* of his purse, and robbers of his subjects."

sure, surely. Distinguish carefully between these words. " I will *surely* be there if you are *sure* he will meet me." Avoid " *Sure*, I'll be there," as an undesirable colloquialism.

suspect. See EXPECT.

swallow. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (6).

swank, swanker. Anglicisms recently imported, but not modern terms. They date from the early years of the last century, and are recorded in Thomas Batchelor's " Orthoepical Analysis of the English Language " (1809), as belonging to the dialect of Bedfordshire. In England, *swank* designates bombastic behavior or talk, accompanied by ostentatiousness of manner. A *swanker* is a pretentious person who strives to impress others that he is their superior or is something different from what he actually is; in the American vernacular, " a four-flusher."

swim. The parts of this verb are *swim*, *swam* or *swum*, *swum*, and *swimming*, but *swam* is occasionally used where *swum* should be. *Not* " He *had swam* a mile before help came," but ". . . *had swum* . . . " Whenever used with the verb " to have," " swum " *not* "swam" is correct. But one may say " He swam a mile from shore."

swine. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (28).

T

tasteful, tasty. That which exhibits taste, beauty, harmony, or other excellence is *tasteful*; that which is savory, because it is appetizing and palatable, is *tasty*. The latter should never be applied to persons, decorations, or dress. A room may be *tastefully* furnished; a woman *tastefully* dressed, but neither *tastily* so.

think for. Incorrectly used for "expect," or "suppose." *Not* "It's not as easy as you *think for*"; omit the *for* or substitute "suppose" for "think for."

timid, timorous. See AFRAID.

trouble. See AFFLICTION.

U

unanimous. See ANONYMOUS.

unique. An adjective meaning "the only one of its kind," frequently misused for "odd," "rare," "unusual." Its meaning shows that it is incomparable. Sometimes used erroneously with *most* and *very*.

United States. Construed as a singular or a plural according to the thought of the speaker or writer. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States justify this practise, but says Fiske, "From 1776 to 1789, the *United States were* a confederation. After 1789, *it was* a federal nation." According to many modern writers, it is correct to say, "The United States of America *is* facing unnatural conditions."

V

vast. A word whose limits are those of the universe but which is frequently misapplied. *Do not say* "vast surprize" when your surprize is *great*; not "*vast* precision" when *marked* precision is what you mean. Let the despondency that wraps the distressed heroine of your scenario be *deep*, if you please, but *not* vast.

veneration. See ADORE.

very. Except where a participle is used as an adjective, it is generally conceded best to interpose an adverb between the participle and this word. Thus, "very *greatly* dissatisfied," "very *much* pleased," are preferred to "*very* dissatisfied," "*very* pleased." Although it may be better grammar to interpose an adverb, as "very *much* pleased," this use of *very* is accepted as good English and has been used for centuries.

veteran. Derived from the Latin *veteranus*, from *vetus*, meaning "old," this word is commonly misused in some parts of the United States in referring to soldiers who have fought in modern campaigns. Now a *veteran* is "one long trained or exercised in any service; *one who has grown old in service;* especially, an old soldier." But we frequently hear persons speak of the *veterans* of the World War, when they refer to the men who saw service in that war. Yet the majority of the men who took part in the World War were and are young men.

W

was. The erroneous use of the *past tense* for the present tense, when a speaker desires to state an existing fact, is very common. For example:

"Tell me, what *was* that building that we saw on Chambers Street?"

"The truth *was* that Jim struck him first."

"Did you tell him you *were* Dolly's sister?"

"We were told that the Mississippi in its course *ran* South."

"We were told that the Temple of Isis *stood* on the island of Philæ."

In all the foregoing cases, the italicized verb should be in the present tense.

were, was. Many speakers and writers disregard the rule that requires the subjunctive mood to be used when, in a conditional clause, the intention is to express doubt or denial. Some of them use the indicative mood instead. "If it *is* . . ." and "If it *was* . . ."; "Whether it *is* . . ." and "Whether it *was* . . ." are expressions heard every day. Other persons mix the subjunctive and the indicative without reason. See quotation in which *were* is right and *was* is wrong.

"If our standard of man's and woman's education *were* on a level, if it *was* the natural thing for an intellectual woman to give as much time to study as it is for an intellectual man . . ."
—MISS WEDGWOOD, *Woman's Work*, p. 269.

whale. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (29).

whereabouts. Does the word *whereabouts* take a verb in the singular or plural? Is "His *whereabouts* is unknown" correct? Nowadays *whereabouts*, although plural in form, is commonly used as a singular. "Husband and wife disappeared; their *whereabouts is* a mystery." The singular form *whereabout* may be found in Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, act ii, scene 1, line 58—"For fear thy very stones prate of my *whereabout*."

who, whom. There is little doubt that the rule requiring the use of the objective case is breaking down.

The following sentences will serve to illustrate usage. "*Who* did you see?" Wrong; it should be "*Whom* did you see?" because *whom* is the object of the verb *see*. "*Who* is she?" Right, because *who* is the subject of the verb *is*. "*Who* are you embroidering that bag for?" Wrong; it should be "*Whom* are you . . ." or "*For whom* are you embroidering that bag," because the preposition *for* governs the objective case. Compare BY.

wicked. See ATROCIOUS.

wolf. See under COLLECTIVE NOUN (30).

worship. See ADORE.

Y

yes. The correct pronunciation of this little word puts the stamp of culture upon the person who uses it. Never say *yep, yeh, yah, yis,* etc.—they are all vulgarisms.

you. The practise, common among the ill-spoken, of forming plurals by adding *s* or *se* to this word can not be too severely condemned. No refined person says *yous* or *youse.*

you all. A Shakespearianism preserved in the South since the founding of Virginia. One says "you all" when one means "you all." Some contend the "all" is unnecessary, but it prevents confusion, and its use is justified. Some people —many thoughtless people—in the South say "you all" meaning one person. The educated people do not, nor did Shakespeare.

> "I see *you all* are bent to set against me your merriment."—*Midsummer Night's Dream,* act iii, scene 2.
>
> "*You all* did see, that on the Lupercal
> I thrice presented him a kingly crown;
> Which he did thrice refuse.
> . . . . . .
> *You all* did love him once, not without cause.
> . . . . . .
> If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.
> *You all* do know this mantle!
> —*Julius Cæsar,* act iii, scene 2.

you was; was you? There are still some men and women who have not learned the simple rule of grammar that forbids the phrase "You *was*" and the interrogation "*Was* you?" "You *were*" and "*Were* you?" are correct.

You, the personal pronoun of the second person, plural, is used also in addressing a single person but with a plural construction; not "You *is*" and "You *was*," but "You *are*" and "You *were.*"

You as a singular in "You *was*" attained wide use, even literary, in the eighteenth century, but is now considered illiterate, *was* having long since been superseded by *were,* and *you* is always used with the plural construction in direct address.

Z

zeugma. A figure in grammar in which an adjective or verb is made to modify or govern two nouns, with only one of which it is grammatically or logically connected: as, "the *control* and *support* which a father *exercises* over his family were withdrawn," where the verb *exercises* applies properly to the noun *control* and only by extension to the noun *support;* a figure to be avoided as not generally approved by grammarians.

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